



**Testimony of Carrie L. Bernier, Esq.  
Executive Director of The Community Fund of Darien  
concerning funding for Regional Action Councils in**

**H.B. No. 6824 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING  
JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER  
PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.**

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services - March 6, 2015*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations subcommittee, my name is Carrie Bernier, and I am the Executive Director of The Community Fund of Darien. I am offering testimony in strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the regional action councils.

In my community, the Lower Fairfield County Communities 4 Action has been a critical partner and invaluable resource in our prevention and education programming. Communities 4 Action has a seat at the table every month at our Human Services Planning Council meetings with town leaders as well as our Thriving Youth Task Force meetings with directors of youth programs. Ingrid Gillespie, our representative, has been a leader in helping us to develop appropriate programs, conduct needs assessment and in providing us with the latest research and information on substance abuse, suicide and mental health issues. As a small nonprofit devoted to community development and needs assessment, we simply wouldn't have the resources to do our work without her.

Let me share with you two recent anecdotes that show the impact of Communities 4 Action in Darien. First, we surveyed over 1,800 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students in Darien this past year using the Search Institute's survey tool. Communities 4 Action was an essential partner at all levels. Ingrid Gillespie helped us prepare for our Board of Education hearing to have the survey approved, she answered the technical questions with expertise and assurance, she provided staff and funding to help aggregate the data into a user-friendly format, and she has given us guidance and advice at all stages of our planning and execution of the results to our community. Second, when we had the unexpected and tragic death of a teen in our town this fall, Ingrid provided emergency response information to connect the "211" emergency mental health team to the proper school and community groups. Ingrid was at my office within 3 hours for an emergency meeting and has offered to do a "Question, Persuade, Refer" training for our human services, school and government personnel in town so we can be prepared should a similar crisis occur in the future.

These are just two examples of the fine work being done on the local level in Darien, but it is by no means the complete list. Our "boots on the ground" work at The Community Fund is well-researched and supported by the educational and data platforms promoted by Communities 4 Action. Small non-profits need Communities 4 Action to connect them to the research, the legislative priorities of prevention in Hartford and the funding to conduct the essential work of prevention. They are an important partner in our work and I urge you to oppose the proposed cuts to the regional action councils.

Thank you, Carrie L. Bernier, Esq.

